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A BIOGRAPHIC CLINIC  
OF BERLIOZ.



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## A BIOGRAPHIC CLINIC ON BERLIOZ.

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It is remarkable that a review of the ill-health of many great literary workers shows the same or very similar clinical histories. With slight variations and individual differences there appear throughout their lives complaints, almost identical, of neuralgia, headache, gastralgia, and other digestional affections, coupled with insomnia, nameless suffering, great depression, pessimism, bitterness, and even suicidal aberration. The fact might long ago have led some astute and observant clinician to add a distinct type of disease to our nosology. The unobservant have prattled of brain-fag, neurasthenia, and the like, when the symptom-complex of a peculiar and differentiated *Morbus Literati*, or *Scrivener's Evil*, was evident.

The case of Berlioz is another striking illustration of this general truth. In reading his letters and autobiography one must guard against his possible tendency to exaggerate somewhat the anguish of his afflictions, and especially, as physicians, we must discriminate and exclude from consideration those troubles which came directly from his lively fancy, his love affairs, etc., in contradistinction to those arising in genuinely morbid physiologic or

neurologic mechanisms. Berlioz was not a great student during his boyhood and youth, but when he came to studying medicine, writing music, and composing newspaper articles his troubles began; they increased up to the end of his life. Omitting the larger number as repetitive and wearying, I choose a few citations to illustrate the general fact of his persistent and increasing suffering:

Berlioz was born in 1803\*. In his twenty-fourth year he was already afflicted with insomnia, and Chopin and Liszt once spent a whole night hunting for him in the fields, about Paris.

"In his youth he sometimes amused himself by deliberately starving, in order to know what evil genius could surmount; later on his stomach had to pay for these expensive fantasies" (Bertrand). Another equally silly philosophy of his disease is made by his biographer, Boulton, who says of Berlioz: "He passes lightly over the privations and semistarvation that undoubtedly laid the foundations of that internal disease which embittered his later years."

Yesterday I was so ill that I could not crawl. (26.)

Suffering from your teeth; if it is likely to be any consolation to you, I can tell you that I am very nearly in the same state, and last month I suffered from the agonies of the damned! I tried several spiritous waters. (27.)

Alas! I have another ill of which, apparently, nothing will cure me except a specific against life. (27.)

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\*The numbers following the excerpts indicate his age at the time they were written.

I was boiling over with impatience at not being able to leave my bed. At last, at the end of the sixth day, I felt a little better. (35.)

A stupid stay at Grenoble, passing half my time ill in bed. (38.)

A violent pain (not a mental pain, so look for no romance: only a very prosaic pain in the side), which forced me to stop at Nancy, where I thought I should have died. (43.)

My neurosis grows and has now settled in the head; sometimes I stagger like a drunken man and dare not go out alone. (53.)

These obstinate sufferings enervate me, brutalize me; I become more and more like an animal. (52.)

Indifferent to everything, or almost everything. (54.)

I am very ill without being able to discover what is the matter with me. (53.)

Horribly ill for two days at Courtavenal. (56.)

Ill as I am, I have still strength enough to rejoice greatly when I hear from you. (56.)

How is your health? As for me, I go up and down in the sad scale, but still I go forward. (57.)

I, too, think my disease is wearing itself out. I am certainly better since I gave up remedies. (57.)

I am no longer running after fortune, but awaiting it in bed. (58.)

I am worse than usual today, and have not strength to begin my article. (58.)

I am so ill today that I have no strength to write any more. (58.)

I suffer martyrdom every day now, from 4 a. m. till 4 p. m. What is to become of me? (59.)

My friends were delighted, but I was quite unmoved, for it was one of my days of excruciating pain and nothing seemed to matter.

Today, I am better and can enjoy their congratulations. (59.)

The effort I had to make to get up this morning brought on an attack of sickness. I am better now. (59.)

I witnessed it all in a state of complete insensibility; it was one of my days of suffering, and every-

thing was a matter of indifference to me. I am better today. (60.)

I have been ill for fifteen days. (60.)

I have come back very tired and in great suffering. I am only going to send you a line or two, and then I shall retire to bed until six o'clock. (60.)

I have been in bed for twenty-two days. (60.)

My God, how I suffer! And I have not time even for that. (60.)

I am still an invalid. (60.)

I am invariably ill one day out of every two. However, for the last few days I do not seem to have suffered so acutely. (61.)

I have been confined to my bed again for the last nine days, and am taking advantage of a moment when I am comparatively free from suffering to write and thank you for your letter. (61.)

I have been wanting to answer you for several days past, but I have not been able; I have been in too great pain. I have spent five days in bed, incapable of an idea, and vainly summoning sleep to my aid. I am rather better today. (62.)

Your note reached me this morning while I was in the midst of one of my paroxysms of pain which nothing can charm away. I am writing in bed between the intervals of rubbing myself. (62.)

I am so weakened and stupefied by my sufferings. (62.)

A martyr to all kinds of pain tonight, but my regret at being unable to go and hear you is not the least of my misfortunes. I am in bed. (62.)

Will you believe that since I have taken to music again my pains have departed? (63.)

I got up today at four o'clock, having been compelled to lie in bed since yesterday. I was past doing anything else. (63.)

I am one of the greatest lie-a-beds living. I live to a very limited extent, it is true. (64.)

I suffer so terribly, dear Madame, and my agony is so unremitting, that I do not know what is to become of me. I do not want to die now. I have something to live for.

I have not written to you since my return, because

I have been in such terrible suffering. I am better today. (65.)

But my old trouble has come back and I suffer more than ever. (65.)

I suffer so continually, dear lady; my paroxysms of pain are so frequent that I cannot think what is to become of me.

I do not want to die now, for I have something to live for. (65.)

In 1868 Berlioz twice fainted, fell, and bruised himself badly, and was under a physician's care for a month. He died in 1869.

The noteworthy fact that stands out in the foregoing citations (and it would be far more striking if I had reproduced the large number of complaints in the later years) is that Berlioz's sufferings were much more constant and intense as the burden of presbyopia came on, and the "accommodation function of the eyes became less and less." It is the rule, not however without many exceptions, that the sufferings due to eyestrain lessen and disappear shortly after sixty. In this instance it was not so, and the poignancy of the complaints increased up to sixty-five. Note that at sixty-five it was his "old trouble" that "came back" to him. At the age of sixty-one his agony and insomnia were so great that he began taking laudanum:

When the pain of mind, body and estate grow too much for me, I take three drops of laudanum to snatch some sleep. (61.)

It is six in the evening, and I have only just got up, for I took laudanum yesterday and am quite stupefied. What a life. (61.)

I wanted to reply to you forthwith, but intolerable pain, sleeping for twenty hours at a stretch, medical nonsense, friction under chloroform, doses of lauda-

num which were futile and only productive of fatiguing dreams, prevented me. (63.)

I can only write a line. I took a dose of laudanum last night, and have not had time to go to sleep quietly. (64.)

I wanted to reply at once, but my tortures, medical stupidity, doses of laudanum (all useless and productive only of evil dreams), prevented me. (64.)

In all the reports of cases similar to that of Berlioz we have abundant evidences of the close connection between literary labor and suffering. The story repeats itself here, even in the detail so frequently found of inability to focus the attention, as well as the eyes, of blankness and "stupidity" when attempting to write. At times this inhibition is only overcome by intense excitement, "working at white heat," etc.

It is an effort to me to write prose, and about the tenth line or so I get up, walk about the room, look out into the street, take up a book, and strive by any means to overcome the weariness and fatigue which instantly overpower me. I have to return to the charge eight or ten times before I can finish an article for the "Journal des Débats," and it takes me quite two days to write one, even when I like the subject, and am interested by it. And then, what erasures, and what scrawls! (24.)

A martyr to insomnia, I lost all elasticity of brain, all concentration, all taste for my best loved studies, and I wandered aimlessly about the Paris streets and through the country round. (24.)

I once remained shut up in my room for three whole days, trying to write a feuilleton on the Opéra Comique, and not able even to begin it. I do not recollect the name of the work of which I had to speak (a week after its first representation I had forgotten it forever), but the tortures I went through during those three days before finding the first three lines of my article, those indeed I can recall. My brain seemed ready to burst; my veins



were burning. Sometimes I remained with my elbows on the table, holding my head with both hands. Sometimes I strode up and down like a soldier on guard in a frost twenty-five degrees below zero. I went to the window, looking out on the neighboring gardens, the heights of Montmartre, the setting sun. . . and immediately my thoughts carried me a thousand leagues away from that accursed Opéra Comique. And when, on turning round, my eyes fell upon the accursed title inscribed at the head of the accursed sheet of paper, so blank and so obstinately waiting for the other words with which it was to be covered, I felt simply overcome by despair. There was a guitar standing against the table; with one kick I smashed it in the centre. . . . On my chimney two pistols were looking at me with their round eyes. . . . I watched them for a long time. . . . I went so far as to bang my head with my fist. At last, like a schoolboy who cannot do his lesson, I tore my hair and wept with furious indignation. The salt tears seemed slightly to soothe me. The barrels of my pistols were still looking at me, so I turned them to the wall.

Next morning I succeeded, I know not how, in writing something, of which I forget both subject and purport. . . . It is fifteen years since then. . . . and my punishment continues still. (26.)

I fear I shall not have the copies of the parts ready. At present I am quite stupid. The fearful strain of thought to which my work is due has fired my imagination, and I am continually wanting to sleep and rest myself. (27.)

You want to know what I do with myself? In the daytime, if I am well, I read or sleep on my sofa or I scribble a few pages. (30.)

When he is writing his hated feuilletons, "the lobes of my brain seem ready to crack asunder. I seem to have burning cinders in my veins." (W. A. Newman, of Berlioz).

I am so extremely lazy about writing; my mind is as inert as my fingers. I have the greatest difficulty in fulfilling even my most necessary duties in this respect.

I have omitted all mention of my infernal article, which I cannot do at night, because sleep is an absolute necessity in my case. It is the first and most

imperious of my wants. If I had to be hanged at nine o'clock in the morning, I should want to sleep until eleven. (49.)

I have to give you an account of my life during the last two years. This long time has been employed in the composition of an opera in five acts, the *Troyens*, of which, as in the case of *L'Enfance du Christ*, I have written both the words and the music. (55.)

I had to work at correction of the errors in the copy; then followed my crises of tears, and convulsions of the heart. I could have written only senseless stuff to you. (56.)

I am so ill I can hardly hold my pen, yet I am forced to write for my miserable hundred francs, the while my brain teems with work and plans and designs that fall dead—thanks to my slavery. (58.)

I have not finished the score of *Beatrice* yet; I can so rarely work at it. (59.)

I am not yet able to resume my work upon *Beatrice et Benedict*. but it will have to be finished somehow. It, at all events, will be performed; but I am ill. (59.)

This letter has fatigued me terribly. (60.)

I am in such terrible agony that I can scarcely write. (60.)

All is going on well, except indeed that I have been writhing in agony in bed for another thirty hours. (60.)

My pain has come on again. I must go and lie down. (61.)

The pain is beginning and I must go to bed. (61.)

I am in such terrible pain this morning that writing is a horrible exertion. (61.)

I have no strength to write more; my head is like a hollow old nut. (61.)

There comes an attack as I write. (62.)

I am so ill that I can scarcely write. (62.)

I have such a wretched headache that I can scarcely write to you. (63.)

I did not write to you yesterday; I was too ill and too bad-tempered. (62.)

Still so unwell that at this moment I have scarcely

strength enough to write to you. I am ill in every way. (64.)

My pain absorbs every other feeling, but you will forgive me. I can feel clearly that I am stupid. I only think of going to sleep. (64.)

It is an old and often observed truth that those afflicted with "migraine," have periodic crises of suffering, absolute relief alternating with the greatest suffering in a seemingly inexplicable manner. Again the case of Berlioz illustrates:

Yesterday I was too ill to walk; today, the demons of the internal regions have given me incredible strength. (26.)

I am very happy, life is charming—no pain, no despair, plenty of day dreams. (26.)

My health is quite restored, and I can eat, though for some time past I have only been able to swallow oranges. In short, I am saved and they are saved; I return to life again with pleasure. (28.)

You know how my life fluctuates. One day calm, dreamy, rhythmical; the next bored, nerve-torn, snappy and snarly as a mangey dog, vicious as a thousand devils, sick of life and ready to end it. (25.)

How unhappily I am put together, a veritable barometer, now up, now down, always susceptible to the changes of the atmosphere—bright or sombre—of my consuming thoughts. (29.)

I am very ill. Fruitless efforts on the part of Lobe and Chéard to set me up. Preparations for the concert. The first rehearsal announced. My spirits rise. I am cured! (Biography, 39.)

Looking more narrowly into the connection between cause and effect we find that the case of Berlioz is like that of all the others; ocular rest, walks and journeys, outings and trips, near or far, become the rule, the necessity, and unless reading and writing are taken up, there

is a temporary freedom from pain and complaint:

. . . enabling him to give up journalism and to travel. He was away frequently between 1841 and 1855, but not enough to account for the irregularly small amount of music he wrote—an amount that becomes still smaller in the later years. The seeds of his illness were in him and affecting his powers of work. (Newman.)

That frightful walk yesterday has undone me: I cannot move, all my joints are paining me, and yet I must walk the whole day long. (25.)

He had a mania for tramping and climbing that invariably carried him beyond his powers of endurance. (Newman.)

My health was quite restored; I spent whole days on the banks of the Arno and in a delightful wood about a league from Florence, reading Shakespeare. (28.)

I found life in town perfectly intolerable, and spent all the time I could in the mountains. (29.)

I had a fresh opportunity for recovering my health on the beneficent shores of the Mediterranean. (41.)

I feel so wretched from this stagnation after so much harmonious movement, that since my return I have been possessed by one idea day and night—that of embarking on board a ship, and going round the world. (42.)

I never was so wearily ill as I am now. I think of nothing but going to sleep; my head is always heavy, and an inexplicable feeling of uneasiness stupefies me. I need long, very long, journeys, and I cannot move further than from one bank of the Seine to the other. (47.)

Goodbye; I must go out and try to walk. If I cannot manage it, I shall go to bed again. (59.)

When first I went into the country my neuralgia was better, but very soon it became worse than ever. from eight in the morning till four in the afternoon. (61.)

The first two days of my stay at Geneva made me think I was completely cured, so entirely was I free from suffering, but my pains subsequently returned

more acute than before. Are you happy in your ignorance of anything resembling this? I am taking advantage of a momentary respite granted me by my pain to write to you. (62.)

How I suffer! If I could I would fly off to Palermo or to Nice.

It is horrible weather. I have to light a lamp at half past three. (62.)

Of what symptoms did Berlioz complain? What were his diseases? In his early student days at Paris, at about the age of twenty, he wrote:

I was utterly sick of the wretched music to which I was obliged to listen, and which would have infallibly brought on an attack of cholera, or driven me into an asylum.

That this is not to be taken humorously appears from the number of references to "cholera" or colic, throughout his correspondence:

I suffer still from that choleraic trouble that sometimes keeps me in bed. However, I am up today, getting ready for the next attack. (29.)

My need of music often makes me ill, it subjects me to nervous tremblings, and besides, the prevalent symptoms of cholera have confined me to my bed for several days, but today I am free, and ready to begin again. (29.)

For the last ten days my infernal colic has not stopped for an hour. Nothing does any good. (56.)

More frequently the simple (and meaningless) word neuralgia, is used, but sometimes more definitely, "neuralgia of the intestines."

As for me. I am a martyr to neuralgia, which for the last two years has settled in my intestines, and except at night, I am in constant suffering. When I was at Baden a short time ago, there were days when I could scarcely drag myself as far as the theatre to conduct the rehearsal. (55.)

You must know that I too, have been rudely shaken by an obstinate attack of neuralgia in the

intestines. There are days when I cannot even write ten lines consecutively. It occasionally takes me four days to finish an article. I am not in so much pain today, and I take advantage of that circumstance to reply to your questions. (58.)

I was very ill, and very much weakened by my neuralgic pains; one must pay for everything in this world. (60.)

I am still very unwell; my neuralgia has become intensified to a pitch beyond my powers of description. (60.)

I am almost as sorely tried as you are by my infernal neuralgia, I spend eighteen hours out of the twenty-four in bed. (61.)

My neuralgic pains have taken possession of me, and torment me regularly from eight o'clock in the morning until three in the afternoon in addition to which I am suffering from an obstinate sore throat, to say nothing of weariness and vexation. (61.)

I am incessantly tortured by my neuralgia. Nevertheless, I live, surrounded by physical pain, and worn out with weariness. (62.)

I suffer so frightfully from the increase of my neuralgia in the intestines that I do not know how I remain alive. (64.)

Laryngitis, bronchitis, coughing, sore throat, etc., are frequent complaints during most of the life:

At Florence I fell a victim to sore throat, and I was obliged to stop there until I was in a fit state to resume my journey. (28.)

I am still suffering from sore throat, and I verily believe it will kill me if I give it time. (29.)

I am back once more from the mountains, where I have spent ten days, pen in hand, amid snow and ice. If it had not been for my infernal throat I should have returned to them again by this time. (29.)

An attack of bronchitis that reduced me to keep my bed and do nothing. (35.)

My answer is short; I am as ill as usual.

After my fifth bath at Nérís the doctor, hearing me speak, felt my pulse and cried:

"Be off out of this as fast as you can; the waters are the worst possible for you, you are on the verge of laryngitis. Confound it all, it is really serious."

So off I went the same evening and was nearly choked by a fit of coughing in the train. (64.)

I am as ill as eighteen horses. I cough like half a dozen glandered donkeys. (64.)

Sometimes there is a combination of both neuralgia and sore throat, or a most suggestive and illuminating alternation of the two affections:

I was suffering from neuralgia in the head, as well as from my everlasting sore throat. (39.)

My laconic reply is—I am always ill.

I was in bed nearly the whole time. At length my sore throat departed, and my natural voice came back, but my neuralgia came back also, more ferocious than ever. (64.)

My nieces at Vienna nursed me devotedly, but when my throat got better back came my neuralgia more fiendishly than ever. (64.)

Berlioz, aged forty-four, writes of "an unspeakable discomfort and nausea like that produced by the sea," and later he alludes to "sea-sickness" while at home in bed, and a "wretched headache." In the Wagner-Liszt correspondence a peculiar figure is reproduced from a drawing of Berlioz which could scarcely have been made if he had not seen before his own eyes the "fortification spectra" or "scotoma scintillans," which is so frequently a forerunner of sick headache. Through the indescriptive and often meaningless terms, "cholera," "colic," "neuralgia," "intestinal neuralgia", etc., the modern physician must thread his way carefully to conclusions. But the cumulative evidence derived from a score of si-

milar cases corroborates the almost certain diagnosis of "migraine" with special trend of the reflex to the digestive organs. But from the first there was a persisting or alternating morbid result in the larynx and middleair-passages. It is noteworthy that in the case of George Eliot, her physician found that "laryngeal sore throat" was the chief complaint for many years prior to her death, and the only one, two days before her death, at sixty-one. Much the same might be said of Lewes. The role played by "colds" in the history of migrainous patients is an astonishing one when viewed collectively. That "migraine," in the vast majority of cases, is due to eyestrain need not be reemphasized to any one knowing the proofs furnished during the last thirty years by hundreds of physicians and thousands of patients.

There is no patient who has suffered much from the reflexes of eyestrain who has not experienced the horror and bitterness of melancholy and depression. In Berlioz's case this gloom became so unendurable that suicide was many times planned, and twice attempted. Once emesis prevented death by poisoning, and another time he was dragged from the water unconscious and saved from suffocation by the efforts of others. Gloom began so early as sixteen, he says, and at the age of twenty he writes:

I became possessed by an intense, overpowering sense of sadness, that in my then sickly, nervous state produced a mental condition adequately to describe which would take a great physiologist. I could not sleep, I lost my spirits, my favorite studies became distasteful to me, and I spent my time



wandering aimlessly about Paris and its environs. During that long period of suffering, I can only recall four occasions on which I slept, and then it was the heavy, death-like sleep produced by complete physical exhaustion. (20.)

He lapsed into a state of distressing melancholy, speaking to nobody, and spending his days in wandering through the woods and his nights in groaning in the dark. (22.)

Twice yesterday I have been a prey to extreme melancholy; I want to weep; I should like to die; I am having a worse attack of spleen than I have ever had. (25.)

Again I relapsed into my habitual gloom and indolence. (25.)

I have been suffering from intense melancholy ever since Sunday; all this excess of emotion has upset me; my eyes are constantly full of tears, and I feel as if I should like to die. (26.)

I am weary, I am weary! The same thing over and over again. But I grow weary now with astonishing rapidity, and I get through as much weariness now in an hour as I used to do in a day, and I drink as ducks do water, for the purpose of finding something to live upon, and, like them, I only find a few uncouth insects. What am I to do? What am I to do? (26.)

I have been somewhat better during the last two days. Last week I was seized with a nervous depression so severe that I could hardly move or dress myself in the morning. I was recommended to take baths, but they did me no good; I remained quite quiet, and youth regained the upper hand. I cannot get used to the impossible, and it is precisely because it is impossible that I have so little life left in me. (26.)

I get more and more soul-weary, more utterly bored as time goes on. (26.)

It was during this period of my academic life that I once more fell a prey to the miserable disease (mental, nervous, imaginary, if you like), which I shall call the bane of isolation. I had my first attack of it when I was sixteen. (29.)

My passionate struggles against the horrible feeling of loneliness and sense of absence.

And yet what was this anguish, compared to the torture I have endured since, which go on increasing day by day? . . .

I do not know how to convey any adequate conception of this unutterable anguish. (29.)

A feeling of intense sadness, an infinite yearning for another state of existence, an intense disgust with the present; in fact, a regular attack of "blue devils" and a longing for suicide. (29.)

There are, moreover, two kinds of spleen—one ironical, scoffing, passionate, violent, and malignant; the other taciturn, and gloomy, requiring rest, silence, solicitude, and sleep. Those who are possessed by this become utterly indifferent to everything, and would look unmoved on the ruin of the world. (29.)

In the profound state of melancholy into which I had fallen. (35.)

I am so constituted that I sometimes suffer without any apparent reason. (39.)

The horrible moments of disgust with which my illness inspires me, during which I find everything I have written cold, dull, stupid and tasteless; I have a great mind to burn it all. (53.)

I live in an absolute isolation of soul; I do nothing but suffer eight or nine hours a day, without hope of any kind, wanting only to sleep, and appreciating the truth of the Chinese proverb—it is better to be sitting than standing, lying than sitting, asleep than awake, and dead than asleep. (53.)

I am ill and sad at heart. (55.)

To physicians, at least, if not to others, the attitude of the medical profession to this patient and to many such patients, is not without interest. Young Berlioz was the son of a physician, and against his will he had been bribed by his father to study medicine. One's curiosity is keenly aroused by the following excerpts from the autobiography:\*

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\*There is a deal of doubt about the oft-bespoken "Inheritance of Disease," but there is none whatever as to the inheritance of organs,—optically imperfect eyes, for instance.

My father has an incurable internal disease, which has often brought him to death's door. He eats scarcely anything, and only keeps himself alive by constant and ever-increasing doses of opium. Once, years ago, he was so maddened by pain that he took thirty-two grains at a dose. "I don't mind telling you," he said to me afterwards, "it was not to cure myself that I took it." Instead of killing him, however, so large a dose relieved him instantly of his pain.

Another quotation which gives us pause is this:

My father was, it may be remarked, far less intolerant of second-rate doctors, who are not only more numerous than bad poets or artists, but are also actively instead of passively dangerous.

Concerning the conditions under which the students at that time pursued the fundamental science of medicine the following quotation makes us shudder, and makes us thankful that we live in a better time:

When I entered that fearful human charnel, littered with fragments of limbs, and saw the ghastly faces and cloven heads, the bloody cesspool in which we stood, with its reeking atmosphere, the swarms of sparrows fighting for scraps, and the rats in the corners gnawing bleeding vertebrae, such a feeling of horror possessed me that I leapt out of the window, and fled home as though death and all his hideous crew were at my heels.

Glimpses are obtained through these passages:

Precisely on that day I fall ill; the doctor, although a great lover of music (the learned and amiable Dr. Gaspard), forbids me to leave my room; in vain I am urged to go and admire a famous organist; the doctor is inflexible, and not till after Holy Week, when there are no more oratorios, or fugues, or chorales to be heard, does the Almighty restore me to health. (39.)

Dr. Amussat, called on me. At sight of me he fell back a step or two.

"Hallo! What's the matter with you, Berlioz? You are as yellow as an old parchment. You look uncommonly irritated and exhausted.

"My dear fellow, you are on the verge of a typhoid fever. You must be bled."

"Very well, don't put it off till tomorrow. Bleed me now!"

I took off my coat immediately. Amussat bled me freely and said:

"Now be kind enough to leave Paris as quickly as possible. Go to Hyeres—Cannes—Nice—where you will; but go south, and breathe the sea air, and think no more of all these things that are inflaming your blood and over-exciting your nervous system, which is quite irritable enough already. It is not a case for *délay*, so good-bye." I took his advice and went to Nice for a month. (41.)

His doctors tell him he has a general inflammation of the nervous system. (54.)

Neither the Allopaths nor the Homoeopaths, nor those who practice either method as desired, could help me.

I took five baths; with the fifth the doctor, feeling my pulse, cried, "Get out, quick, the waters are not good for you, you will have laryngitis. You must go elsewhere and have your throat cared for. The devil! This is no small affair!" I went away the same evening, and nearly choked from coughing on the train. At Vienna my voice returned, and my throat trouble disappeared. But my neuralgia returned, more ferocious than ever.

You talk like the doctor. 'It is neuralgia.'

Yes, I am in Paris, but so ill I can hardly write. (64.)

When he returned from the banks of the Neva, Berlioz experienced great lassitude, and his nervous malady grew worse. He went to see the famous Dr. Nélaton, who, after having sounded and questioned him, said: "Are you a philosopher?" "Yes," replied the patient. "Well, then, put some courage into your philosophy, for nothing can cure you." Thus assured of a speedy and fearfully pain-

ful death, the old maestro made up his mind to change his bed of suffering.

How far in a given instance, disease affects the character both of the man and his literary or artistic productions is, of course, of difficult determination. Every experienced physician who has scrutinizingly observed patients for many years, can be in no doubt of the fact, and especially must it be true as a general statement. The word, *cretin*, designates mental as well as physical peculiarities of a pronounced type. The influence of chronic alcoholism upon the moral and mental nature is evident to all. Out of a severe illness no patient emerges with the same disposition as before. Any number of similar truths and their illustrations will recur to the reader. How certain, therefore that a morbid factor operating agonizingly throughout a lifetime and every day, upon the head, the centre of thought and feeling, and upon the digestion, the mechanism for the supply of all physiologic force, —how inevitable that the emotions, patience, self-control, mentality, etc., should be, if not morbidized, at least profoundly changed and colored; and if this is so it must follow that the literary, musical, or artistic qualities and abilities of the changed maker should themselves be other than they would have been had not suffering been there to endure or to irritate. The Carlyle of *Characteristics* is a very different man from the Carlyle of *Shooting Niagara*. Certainly the aphorism-style, if not the "content" of every sentence of Nietzsche's

later years was a direct result of writing while walking and of his unendurable agonies. It is, one may safely believe, more than a coincidence that pessimism and atheism are so abundantly present in the works of a score of great writers chosen at random who suffered from "migraine," and is as absent in a score who showed no symptoms of eyestrain.

Was the character of Berlioz and of his music influenced by his "migraine"? The question is treated in an admirable manner by Ernest Newman, in an essay of his *Musical Studies*. Newman has no conception of what ailed Berlioz, but the conclusion reached by a wise acumen is that the source of some of his peculiarities as a writer and musician was "physiological"—his lifelong suffering, he rightly assumes, could not permit it otherwise. This, also, in the face of the discrimination emphasized by Newman that there has been a too wholesale echoing of the charge of Berlioz's so-called turbulence and exaggeration. It was by no means true, as Grove's *Dictionary* says, that Berlioz's "imagination was always at white heat, his eloquence poured forth in a turbid impetuous current, etc." "Extravagance" was not the striking fault of all his compositions. There was reticence and poise in many of his compositions. It is most strange that, not dreaming of the trend and reach of his discriminations and judgments, Newman finds that the intellectual and productive powers of Berlioz reached a climax about

1838 or 1840, and "both the music and prose of his later years show how greatly his character was altering."

His fever had all died down by 1846; had he only kept his health up to this stage of his career, who knows to what sunlit heights he might not have attained? In spirit, in experience of life, in moral balance, in the technique of his art, he had now enormously improved; but set against all this was that insidious disease that so woefully hindered the free working of what had once been so eager and keen a brain. It diminished the quantity of work he could do; it spoiled some of it altogether—the cantata, "L'Impériale," for example, where the unimpressive writing is throughout that of an mentally exhausted man. Yet a sure instinct seems often to have guided him even in this epoch of distress and frustration. He could write only a few lines each week; but as a rule he seems to have chosen happily his times for work, seizing the rare and fleeting moments when the poor brain and body were held together in a temporary harmony.

I cannot forbear further quotation from this writer who, as it were, unawares, catches the right, and almost the medical, view, by reason of sympathetic truthfulness.

The best of his later work need not fear comparison with the best of his earlier periods, and how changed in mood and outlook it all is! All his old Romanticism is gone, not only from his music, but from the basis of his music. Instead of the old violent literary themes, with their clangorous rhetoric and their purple coloring, he now loves to dwell among themes of classic purity of outline, and to lavish upon them an infinite delicacy of treatment. . . . In much of the music of "Les Troyens" there are only too many signs of physical and mental exhaustion. . . he was shattered by the disease that broke him body and soul. So he retired into himself and waited, as calmly and philosophically as might be, the end. . . . The later music, as I have tried to show, is generally beautiful enough; the fault does not lie there. But Berlioz failed to beat

out for himself the new forms that might reasonably have been expected from him by those who had followed his career from the first . . . Nothing in him comes to full fruition. Each branch is lopped off almost as soon as it leaves the trunk. He is a pathetic monument of incompleteness. His disease and the ignorant public between them slew his art!

The conclusion draws itself. But one should add that the medical profession of continental Europe, and most of that of the rest of the world, is as incapable today of preventing these tragedies as it was fifty or one hundred years ago. In addition to the incapacity of ignorance it has now added the sin of wilful negligence and lazy prejudice. The present-day Berliozes, Taines, Balzacs, Nietzsches, Wagners, etc., are crippled with the same mysterious, relentless disease, "the nature of which", as Osler erroneously says, "is unknown," and civilization still watches the wreckage of thousands of precious lives, and the stifling or morbidizing of the creations of their genius. When the literary, artistic, and scientific worlds once thoroughly realize how so many of their members have had their lives made tragical by the fault of still recklessly living medical prejudice, it will rise in unfor- giving wrath against us. Civilization itself, indeed, should be mightily concerned in the matter. The millions of cases of equally great personal tragedies of school children, students, sewing women, clerks, workmen and work- women, and handicraftsmen, who have suc- cumbed to a similar fate, but "all unknown of fame", add their silent reproaches.